



Women and Minority Veterans Quarterly Newsletter

October- December 2008

A Message from Deputy Secretary Barbara Ward



Thank all women veterans who attended the 2008 conference held in Sacramento on August 8th. Based upon the feedback obtained from the conference evaluations, the first women veterans conference was a huge success. As you may recall, our attendance target was 200 women veterans and we had over 160 veterans who registered for the conference.

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California Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Honored

*Barbara Ward Appointed to
USDVA Advisory Committee on
Women Veterans*

*Steve Jorgenson Recognized For His
Commitment to Veterans*

California Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary Barbara Ward has been appointed to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Advisory Committee on Women Veterans by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary James B. Peake. M.D.

"We are honored to have Barbara serve on this committee," said Tom Johnson, California Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "Her experiences as a nurse and as a member of the military will undoubtedly serve the committee well. California now will have an ally looking out for the welfare of the many women veterans who make the Golden State their home."

The Advisory Committee on Women Veterans assesses the needs of women veterans, with respect to USDVA programs such as compensation, rehabilitation, outreach, healthcare, etc. The Committee reviews the USDVA's programs, activities, research projects and other initiatives designed to meet the needs of women veterans; and makes recommendations to the USDVA Secretary on ways to improve, modify, and affect change in programs and services for women veterans and follows up on all those recommendations.

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A Message From Deputy Secretary Barbara Ward cont:

Please review some of the comments and support our sponsors who made it possible for us to offer a free conference for our women veterans. Pictures from the conference have been posted on our website.

Based upon the overwhelming positive feedback, The California Department of Veterans Affairs has decided to make this an annual event that will rotate to different locations throughout the State each year.

Our 2009 conference will be held September 11th and 12th in Southern California. Contract negotiations are underway with conference sites. The conference format will be similar to that of the 2008 conference and will incorporate many of the suggestions made via the evaluation process. It will be a 2 day conference and will allow conference participants to attend all afternoon break-out workshop sessions. There will also be an awards banquet dinner and selected women veterans will be recognized based upon established criteria.

As you can imagine, volunteers are very important in the planning phases of next year's conference. Therefore, if you have an interest in working with us to make the 2009 a success by serving on one of our planning committees, please send me an email (Barbara.ward@cdva.ca.gov). We would like to get an early start with our planning and are seeking support from veteran service organizations, veteran service providers, community agencies that serve women veterans, and interested parties who serve and support women veterans.

Our outreach efforts continue to both women and minority veterans in ensuring that they utilize their earned benefits. Please remember that women veterans can call our special dedicated line to receive assistance by calling: 916-653-2551.

As I continue to travel around the State and participate in outreach programs and activities, I look forward to meeting our women and minority veterans and serving all veterans and their families. To all veterans, I say, Thank You for Your Service!

Barbara Ward

Deputy Secretary for Women and Minority Veterans Affairs

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California Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Honored cont:

Steve Jorgenson, Administrator of the Northern California Veterans Cemetery, was recognized by the Shasta County Veterans Affiliated Council for his outstanding service to veterans and their families during the organization's Annual Awards Banquet on October 10, 2008. Jorgenson also received a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition from U.S. Representative Wally Herger, and a California Assembly Certificate of Recognition from Assembly Member Doug LaMalfa.

"It is only fitting that Steve be recognized for this zeal and tireless work with veterans' families during their times of grief," said Johnson. "As Administrator of the Northern California Veterans Cemetery, he not only assists families logistically, but he also helps to ease some of the pain they are going through."

The Northern California Veterans Cemetery is intended to be a dignified final resting place for California's veterans of the armed services, their spouse and eligible dependents. It has been designed to provide a place of meditation and quiet contemplation for veterans, their families and friends. The Cemetery conveys the appreciation of the people of California to its veterans answering the call of duty and faithfully and honorably serving the United States of America and the State of California.



Hispanic Heritage Celebrated at Barstow Veterans Home

For the first time in its 12 year history, the Veterans Home of California, Barstow celebrated Hispanic Heritage month, thus honoring its Hispanic residents.

"We're service people. No matter what we're doing, we do it to the best that we can do, and we stay until the job is done, and then we still go an extra mile," said Danny Durate, Vietnam veteran and Barstow Veterans Home resident.

On hand to perform Mexican Folkloric dances, Alexis Lopez, 8, left, Gabby Ventura, 9, and Jessie Ayers (below) twirl their dresses during the Hispanic Heritage celebration on September 23rd at the Veterans Home.

"This is my country. You do what you know is right for your country. I'm proud to be an American," state Ramiro "Rudy" Rueda, Korea veteran and Veterans Home resident.



ATTENTION VETERANS & VETERANS-OWNED BUSINESSES: NEW, COMPLIMENTARY RESOURCES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES *

IBM and the International Finance Corps of the World Bank is extending its on-line resource for small business to veteran's organizations and veterans owned small businesses. Called the SME Toolkit (<http://us.smetoolkit.org/us/en>), it is an on-line resource and it has an array of new features providing expert advice for starting, growing or maintaining a business. The new tools include daily expert advice by Jim Blasingame, the #1 ranked small business expert on the Internet. A new small business video learning series is available covering topics such as incorporating, bookkeeping, managing credit and avoiding burnout.

The toolkit was introduced last year in the U.S. for Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American and Women-owned businesses, and contains thousands of how-to articles, free Web software, press release distribution offerings and directory listing, financial calculators, business readiness quizzes, HR and more. Most of the toolkit is now available in Spanish.



<http://us.smetoolkit.org/us/en>

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First Female Pilot Wins Fighter Aces' Award

Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle Pilot Capt. Shannon Lippert is the first woman to win the prestigious American Fighter Aces Association's Francis S. Gabreski Award. Capt. Lippert was selected the most outstanding performer of the year following a competition June 27, 2008, among pilots flying all fighter aircraft types in the Air Force.

Capt. Lippert flies in the 333rd Fighter Squadron, 4th Fighter Wing, based at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, NC. She was an accomplished T-38 Talon pilot and instructor at Columbus AFB, MS, prior to her F-15E Strike Eagle assignment.

The Columbus, OH, native graduated from Basic Operational Training as the top air-to-air pilot in the class and received the distinguished graduate honor for Class 06-CBE. Capt. Lippert told an *Air Force News* reporter July 3, 2008, that she was "surprised" to win. "They were reading what had been submitted and I was like, 'Man, that person sounded pretty good,' but I didn't really associate it with myself."

Summit Brings Renewed VA Drive for Women Veterans

Peake: Reinventing to be "Women-Centric"

An aggressive push to ensure women veterans receive the highest quality of care in VA medical facilities was pledged by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake at a recent VA National Summit on Women Veterans' Issues.

Although VA already has services for women patients equal to those men receive, Peake told the audience of more than 400 women-veteran advocates, "We are reinventing ourselves by expanding our women-centric focus to initiate new programs that meet the needs of women veterans."

Citing the demographic shift that brings increasing numbers of women to VA for care and the need for changes, Peake announced formation of a work group to focus on women's needs in prosthetics and rehabilitation, hiring women's advocates in VA medical centers, developing quality measurements specifically for women patients, purchasing more state-of-the-art, specialized women's health care equipment, and expanding medical education in women's health for VA care providers.

Summit attendees also learned that VA recently established a work group whose goal is to ensure every female veteran enrolled in VA care has a women's health primary care provider, especially to meet gender-specific needs.

The June 20-22 conference in Washington focused on how to ensure VA meets women-specific health needs and how to inform more women veterans of their VA benefits. It was the fourth women's summit, which VA holds every four years.

Summit co-sponsors included the American Legion Auxiliary, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars. Other assisting veterans groups included the Blinded Veterans Association, Military Officers Association of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America, the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America and TriWest.



Women Veterans' Writing Retreats

Women veterans of any military service are invited to attend these free writing retreats taking place at the Veterans Memorial Building, 401 Van Ness, in San Francisco on November 15, 2008 and January 17, 2009. Come and enjoy short periods of sitting and walking in silent meditation, writing together in silence, and listening with compassion as you and others share their poems, stories, and personal writings. Share in the vegetarian pot luck and enjoy the company of women veterans like you.

This Writing Retreat will be facilitated by Sharon Lee Kufeldt, CHT, USAF 69-71, Past Commander of American Legion Post #315.

To Register contact Sharon Lee Kufeldt at 650-799-1070 or via email at veteranshealing@yahoo.com.

CalVet 2008 Women Veterans Conference a Success

The following are excerpts from responses submitted on the evaluation form by attendees to the 2008 CalVet Women Veterans Conference held August 8, 2008 in Sacramento.

"Everything was great, more information than I can use, long time coming."

"Networking/ Sharing information with other women."

"Openness of all the speakers on issues of importance."

"Enjoyed the topics learned a lot of new and useful information and of course the great networking."

"For the first conference it was a great start!"

"The connection to women veterans."

"Receiving so many veterans resources. Great panel of speakers presenting on a variety of topics pertinent to female veterans. Facilities very comfortable (except the room temperature) and food and drinks great. "Positive focus on women's needs and meeting those needs."

"It opened my eyes to the benefits available to women veterans."

"The whole program was well planned."

*"The legislative/policy updates. The diversity of veterans service providers/support. * the women in the military experiences."*

"Everything was great – the staff was great."

"Networking opportunities! Would love to see this expand. Provide list of provider/organizational attendees, contact information. Put organization on name tags."

CalVet gives special thanks to the following sponsors without whose assistance this conference would not have taken place.

HELP AMERICA FOUNDATION, www.helpamericafoundation.org

RANDOM HOUSE PUBLISHING, www.randomhouse.com

DEVRY UNIVERSITY, www.devry.edu

PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC, www.pge.com

WEST CARE, www.westcare.com

CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S CAUCUS, www.sen.ca.gov/womenscaucus

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS SACRAMENTO CHAPTER 6, www.dav.org

Recently Signed Legislation

SB 1401 (Simitian) Screening for Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Requires the California Department of Veterans Affairs and the Military Department to develop plans to outreach to Guard members or veterans returning to California from combat and assist them to obtain screening for Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

SB 1455 (Cogdill) Gold Star Family License Plates

This bill authorizes a person who is a family member of a member of the United States Armed Forces who was killed while serving on active duty in the military, to apply for a Special Recognition License Plate. The License Plates will contain a gold star and the words "Gold Star Family." This bill will not impact the General Fund because all of the costs of producing the license plates (estimated \$300,000) will come from private donations to the Gold Star Family License Plate Account. This bill was amended to satisfy the concerns of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Housing.

SB 1572 (Wyland) Veterans Bond Act of 2008

This bill led to the Veterans Bond Act of 2008 to appear on this year's November ballot, which was passed by California's voters, to authorize the issuance of \$900 million in State of California General Obligation Bonds to provide for the continuation of the CalVet Home Loan program, which is administered by the California Department of Veterans Affairs. The CalVet Home Loan program has always been self-supporting. There has never been an adverse impact on the State General Fund. Throughout its history, the CalVet program has been totally supported by the participating veterans at no direct cost to the taxpayer. The CalVet Farm and Home Loan program has helped more than 400,000 California veterans buy a home or farm since its beginning in 1924.



Websites Of Interest To Women Veterans

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs -- www.va.gov

CA Department of Veterans Affairs -- www.calvet.ca.gov

U.S. Department of Defense -- www.defenselink.mil/faq/pis/mil_strength.html

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services -- www.dtic.mil/dacowits

Women Veterans Health Program -- www.va.gov/vvhp

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Women's Health -- www.4women.gov

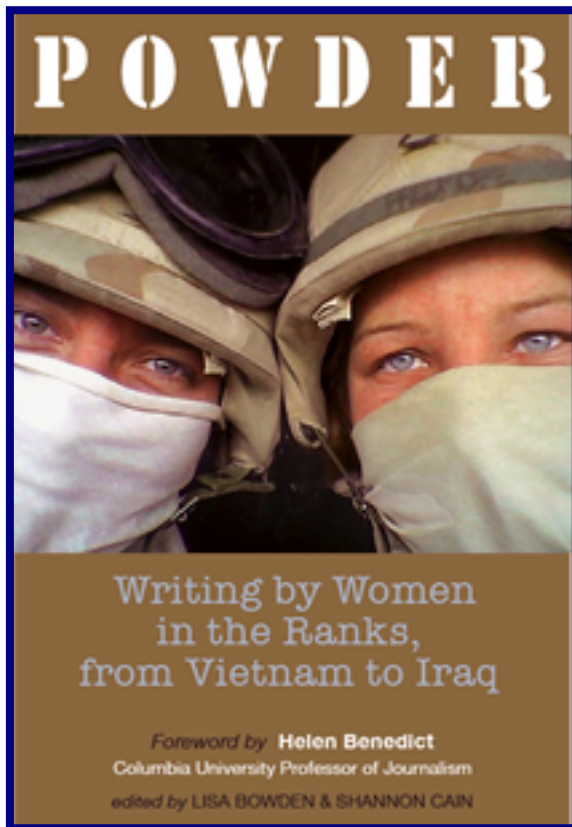
National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators -- www.naswvc.com

National Personnel Records Center (Military Records -- DD214) -- <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/get-service-records.html>

Military Women Veterans History -- <http://userpages.ug.com/captbarb/>

National Association of Child Care Resources & Referral Agencies -- <http://www.naccrra.org/>

POWDER: Writing by Women in the Ranks, From Vietnam to Iraq



As the war in Iraq continues into its sixth year, Kore Press announces the first-ever collection of memoir and poetry by women who have served in the United States military. In her Introduction to *Powder*, Columbia University Professor of Journalism Helen Benedict notes that “today women make up over 14 percent of the armed forces and comprise 11.4 percent of officers serving in the Middle East. As of 2006, over two thousand women who fought in Iraq or Afghanistan had been awarded Bronze Stars for valor, and more than thirteen hundred had earned the Combat Action Badge.”

“Women tell different war stories than men,” Benedict says. “They tend to be less in thrall to the masculine posturing that so many military men feel compelled to perpetuate...as a result, there is little swagger in this collection, but a lot of soul searching.”

Contributors to *Powder* have seen conflicts from Somalia to Vietnam to Desert Shield. The 40 poems and personal essays collected in this volume are inspired by a photo

album of the enemy dead; heat exhaustion on an afternoon in Mosul; a first jump from an airplane; fending off advances from Iraqi men; an attempted rape by a Navy SEAL; interrogating suspected terrorists; contemplation of suicide; and a spiritual meditation on preparing the bodies of fallen comrades for burial. This writing exposes the frontline intersection of women and soldiering, describing from a steely-eyed female perspective the horror, the humor, the cultural clashes and the fear.

“We titled the book *Powder* in recognition of the ways in which women in the ranks live multifaceted lives, not only as members of the military but also, of course, as mothers, daughters and lovers,” says Powder co-editor Lisa Bowden. “We think of gunpowder, baby powder, the powder of rubble, powdered milk, blasting powder, face powder, the powdery sand of occupied desert countries; and the ash that fell on lower Manhattan on September 11th, 2001.”

Many of these 19 contributors are book authors and winners of writing awards and fellowships; several hold MFAs from some of the country’s finest programs. Others have not been published before. They were air traffic controllers, medics, Arabic linguists, sonar technicians and interrogators. Many joined the military as teenagers and left in their twenties; others remained for a career of service.

Kore Press is a nonprofit literary publisher of writing by women. Since 1993 Kore’s vision has been to publish and distribute excellent works of literary and artistic value by a diversity of women, especially those traditionally underrepresented in the cultural mainstream. *Powder* is available for purchase from Kore Publishing at: www.korepress.org/catalog.htm.



FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE



I am coming home!

I see the mountains approaching; it's not too far ahead. It's been a long time since I've been home, but the hills look familiar, the crops are standing in the fields waving "hello" to me as the gentle winds blow. The antelope turn and look up at me and nod their heads as they too greet me. As I fly across the river I know that it won't be long now. Soon I'll be back where I belong. Home!

I wonder if I've been forgotten. It's been such a long, long time. Things have changed so much. Wait. There. I see the Courthouse, and there stands the grand lady who holds the dreams of all within her bosom. She, too, welcomes me. What's this in the center? Why, it's a memorial, erected to honor those who served.

No, I have not been forgotten! There stands my flag, waving, in the breeze, and just below it wave the flags of those who have made certain my memory will live on.

Tears fill my eyes, my heart swells, and my breast puffs out with pride and a sense of peace. For inside that courthouse are listed the many names of the spirits that I represent.

As I alight on a branch overlooking those names of honor, I stand proud. Proud of those who gave all, and proud of those who gave some, and continue to give by protecting the memories.

People of Goshen County, I salute You. I shall stand guard over this hallowed hall eternally; guarding a memory and an ideal. For you see, that ideal is freedom, for freedom isn't given, it's earned. It's earned with the blood and lives of those you love and have loved.

Please, never forget those loved ones. For as I am the Eagle, they are the Golden Knights. Their Spirits stand with me, and together we stand for the freedom of our great country.

As you pause before us, and shed a tear or two, remember that this memorial was earned equally by some who gave all and did not come home, and by those who gave some and did come home. When you see that veteran who smiles and waves to you, remember, too, that they are the Golden Knights. Honor them as we do, for that Golden Knight is a living Hero, and part of the reason that you are free today.

Richard D. Barber
Chief Warrant Officer
ARNG: Ret. 1990



The Service Women's Action Network*

SWAN'S VISION

As a leading voice of military women and veterans. The Service Women's Action Network (SWAN) promotes personal and social transformation for a peaceful world.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Service Women's Action Network supports and develops the leadership of veterans, mentors young women considering military service, works to solve problems facing women in uniform, and provides and promotes services that are healing to women after their military service experience. SWAN establishes a worldwide network of military women, veterans and allies to provide lasting support, community and resources.

THE NEED FOR SWAN IS NOW

The Service Women's Action Network is a group of military service women and allies who came together in 2007 to create a network of support for military service women and also women considering military service. For veteran women, SWAN's goal is to offer alternative options for healing and transitioning back into the civilian world. It is crucial to address the needs of these women who will be role models for future generations.

It is a crucial time for women in the military

- With over 155,000 women currently serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- 15% of our military service personnel are women.
- The current VA system provides limited services specified for women.

WHAT SWAN IS STANDING FOR

SWAN is currently creating networks within the military and veterans systems to provide guidance to ease the process of obtaining support. Military personnel, particularly women, are often sent through these systems without necessary information.

SWAN's goal is to build a national network, reach out to military service women, and raise awareness about the issues women in the military face. SWAN would like to reach women from all walks of life and ask them to share their experiences. We reclaim our voices as military service women who have been silenced for decades and now speak to be heard and acknowledged. SWAN provides a place for women to share their strengths and support fellow sisters in transforming their personal lives and the lives of those we touch for a more peaceful world.

www.servicewomen.org

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Women Veterans in Prison Contribute to Society

By Stacy Studebaker
USDVA

According to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), in 1998, there were 84,427 women sentenced to state or federal prisons. In a 2000 DOJ report, the number of incarcerated veterans was about 225,700. The number of female veterans is about 1-2 percent of the total incarcerated veteran population.

Substance abuse and a history of violence place women at risk for incarceration because the risks they take may also be illegal. Women tend to commit crimes related to their survival. They are trying to cope, and often trying to provide for themselves and their children. Women, who have been victimized in the past, are at risk for prostitution and other crimes to satisfy a partner.

But these women survive in the prison environment and while awaiting their release, many try to improve their lives with education, healthier living, and improvement of work and communication skills. It is hoped that these skills will give these women a fighting chance at making a successful life transition and thus further avoid becoming inmates again in the future.

While women veterans struggle to cope with bureaucratic red tape to get assistance from the USDVA for themselves and their children while incarcerated, many find an outlet for their frustrations by helping out their communities from the inside.

Incarcerated women veterans in the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla have found a way to do just that. Many of these women belong to the Veterans' Support Group of Central California Women's Facility which sponsors fundraisers throughout the year to assist veterans and military personnel throughout the year.

The dedication and hard work these women veteran inmates put into making these fundraisers successful is

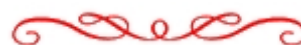
truly worthy of notice. During the past two years these women have contributed tremendously. Following is a breakdown of some of the beneficiaries.

➤ Christmas Cards for Troops in Iraq	4,000
➤ Toys for Tots	\$350.
➤ Blue Star Moms	\$359.
➤ Palo Alto Healthcare System	\$2,058.
➤ Word from Home	\$2,058.
➤ Health Care for Homeless Veterans of Fresno	\$3,989.
➤ Veterans of Foreign Wars, Chowchilla	\$3,989.

Blue Star Moms and Word from Home are community organizations that ship care packages to local soldiers serving in the War on Terror.

Some sobering statistics regarding veterans in prison from a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- ❖ Among adult males in 1998, there were 937 incarcerated veterans per 100,000 veterans residents
- ❖ About 20% of veterans in prison reported seeing combat duty during their military service
- ❖ Veteran (30%) were more likely than other state prisoners (23%) to be first-time offenders
- ❖ Among violent state prisoners, the average sentence of veterans was 50 months longer than the average non-veteran



Upcoming Events

DECEMBER 2008

Dec. 7 Observance of Pearl Harbor

Dec. 10-14 Welcome Home Vietnam Veteran Week and 20th Anniversary of the Dedication of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial

SEPTEMBER 2009

Sept. 11-12 CalVet Women Veterans Conference – Stay tuned for more information



H O M E L O A N S

Veterans: You may be eligible for a 30-Year Home Loan.

**Contact CalVet at 866-653-2510 or visit
www.calvet.ca.gov/calvetloans for more information.**

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